



**Contact:**

Alice Mandt: 859.559.8134

Jody Thompson: 502.564.4496

## **Kentucky hemlock trees face serious threat from invasive insect**

*State forestry officials urge landowners to apply treatment*

**Frankfort, Ky. (March 31, 2014)** - Tens of millions of Kentucky hemlock trees are at risk from a bug—just 1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch in size—that literally sucks the life out of the tree by feeding on the starches that are the tree's food source. The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (uh-DEL-jid), which has no natural predators, has infested trees in nearly a quarter of the state's 120 counties, mostly in southeastern Kentucky, but also as far west as Lexington.



*Hemlocks damaged by Hemlock Woolly Adelgid*

"Hemlock trees are vital to the state's ecosystem," said Alice Mandt, Kentucky's Hemlock Woolly Adelgid coordinator. "For example, as an evergreen, the shade they provide regulates the water temperature in streams. That produces higher oxygen levels in the water, allowing certain rare species of fish to exist."

But the hemlock's environmental value is only part of the story, says Mandt. "Hemlocks are a major piece of Kentucky's scenic beauty. Losing them would be a terrible blow to the state's natural landscape, which is one of the things that attracts tourists to Kentucky." Already in a number of the impacted counties there are sizable locations where hemlocks have died or are dying. And the adelgid is spreading across the state,

steadily migrating westward.

### **Fighting the problem**

To combat the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, forestry division workers are applying a chemical treatment around the base of the tree and are urging landowners to apply a similar treatment to their hemlocks by using any one of a number of products for trees and shrubs that contain the active ingredient

Imidacloprid. They simply mix and pour it around the base of the tree in what is known as a “soil drench.” “This is an effective and easy way to kill the adelgid and protect the trees,” said Mandt. “It’s certainly a lot less expensive than having to remove a tree or a stand of trees.” More than 100,000 trees on state and public land have been treated.

Another way for landowners to help control the spread of the pest is to not put birdfeeders in their hemlocks because birds are one of the main methods of transportation for the adelgid. In addition landowners can contact their local county extension office.

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, which is native to Asia, has been steadily gaining ground in Kentucky over the past few years. Its presence has grown from two counties in 2006 to nearly 30 counties today. It was first found in the Eastern U.S. in Virginia in 1951 and is now in 18 states.

“We’re doing everything we can to stop this pest in its tracks so that Kentucky’s environment and natural beauty can be protected,” said Mandt.



*An infested hemlock branch*

For more information visit the [Kentucky Division of Forestry website](#).

###